

Bishop Paul Bradley and the Diocese of Kalamazoo Present:

# Diocesan Priorities Study Guide





## Using this Guide

This guide can be used by an individual or a group of people. This will assist in integrating the diocesan priorities into your own daily life, into the life of your groups, and into the life of your parish.

You will find three sections for each of the priorities. These are Landscape, Learn, and Lead. Use the Landscape section to understand better what the Church and World currently looks like in this area. The Learn section will give some theology and other concepts to understand the issues better. Finally, the Lead section will assist with where you or your group can discuss how to integrate these priorities into your lives and lead others in them.

## What are the Priorities:

1. Fostering Priestly Vocations
2. Accompanying Families Toward Holiness
3. Activating Missionary Disciples

# Fostering Priestly Vocations



## Landscape

Each diocese is responsible to recruit their own priests. In most dioceses the majority of priests come from their parishes, enter seminary, and are ordained and serve for their lifetime in their own diocese. Some diocese are in more need and will ask for religious orders or another diocese to assist. These priests come to the diocese as an agreement between the religious order/other diocese and the diocese the priest will serve in. These are not typically

considered stable situations as those agreements can and do change. A vibrant diocese has a steady group of young men that are entering into the priesthood from within their diocesan boundaries.

Currently the Diocese of Kalamazoo has 53 priests in active ministry. Of these 15 are from outside the diocese and connected to a religious order or another diocese. These 15 could be asked to go back to their home area by their superior/bishop at any time. That means we have 38 stable diocesan priests. We have 13 priests that are at retirement age or will reach retirement age in the next 5 years. In that time we have the potential to have 3 people ordained to the priesthood, so in the next five years we could potentially only have 43 active priests, if all of the priests from outside the diocese remain.

We have 59 parishes that are brought together in 26 Collaboratives. Each collaborative has one pastor and some have an associate or two. The ministry and administration of our pastors are stretched due to pastoring more than one parish. Priests are in need of support in their vocation and in the administration of the parishes.

Looking at the national trend for those ordained to the priesthood there has been a very slow uptick in the number of ordinations nationwide. However, this is still not replacing those who are in ministry and are retiring. The average age of a priest being ordained this last year was 35. Most had attended some Catholic education or had been homeschooled. Seventy-four percent of those who were ordained this last year had been altar servers. Most, almost ninety percent were encouraged by someone to join the priesthood. See

the chart below to see who encouraged them. Astoundingly fifty-one percent were discouraged from becoming a priest. The top three discouragers were friends, other family member, and fathers.

***Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people?***  
***(Please check all that apply):***  
 Percentage of all responding ordinands

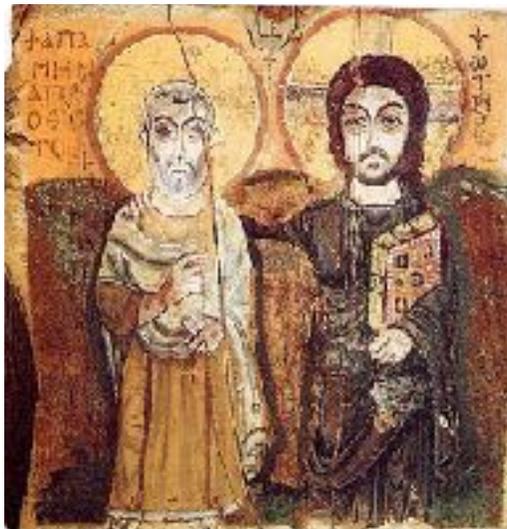
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Parish Priest	70	59	74
Friend	48	49	49
Parishioner	47	39	50
Mother	37	40	37
Teacher/Catechist	31	33	31
Father	26	22	27
Grandparent(s)	21	17	23
Other relative	20	14	22
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	18	24	17
Religious Sister	17	22	16
Youth Minister	16	15	17
Bishop	13	8	15
Religious Brother	13	30	8
Deacon	10	6	12
Military Chaplain	2	0	2

All national stats and chart from: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/ordination-class/class-of-2018/upload/Ordination-Class-of-2018-FINAL.pdf>

# Learn

## What is a Vocation?

Every baptized Catholic has been given the universal call to holiness. This is our primary vocation. How we live that vocation out in lives of service gives each Catholic a particular call. This call to service in the Church is found in vocations to married life, religious life, single life, and the ordained life. The priestly life is a call within the ordained life. In the context of this priority, a priestly vocation is a call from God to the heart of a man to be solely His as a co-worker in living and preaching the Gospel. "The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads His Church." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1547) A vocation is discovered through the promptings of God and the peace that comes in prayerfully discerning and considering priesthood. Continual prayer, reception of the Sacraments, and spiritual direction are all critical in exploring the priestly vocation.



## Why Priesthood?

The priest is the authorized mediator who offers true sacrifice in acknowledgment of God's dominion over humans and in expiation for their sins (cf. Modern Catholic Dictionary). This is an important distinction between being a priest and being a pastor in a non-catholic Church. The Catholic priest does offer sacrifice to God. Priesthood confers on a man the power of consecrating and offering the body and blood of Christ, and of remitting and retaining sins (cf. Modern Catholic Dictionary). The priest promises celibacy (sacrificing the gifts of marriage and children), simplicity (giving up a career and lucrative possessions in order to be present to God's people), obedience (respect and child-like adherence to the Bishop and his successors and foregoing one's own ambitions) while committing to a life of prayer and service so that Jesus Christ might be known and experienced through His priest. The priest confects the sacraments that allow the faithful an intimate encounter with Jesus and fulfills the Scripture that Christ will be with us always (cf. Matthew 28:20). The priest stands *in persona Christi* in the person of Christ while administering the sacraments. The priesthood is not intended to be a position of power, but a position of service to the people of God, bringing Jesus' grace to them through the sacraments. The priest is called to lay down his life for the members of the Church as Jesus lays down His life for the Church.

## **How to Foster a Vocation?**

Priests, parish leadership, and the parish as a whole have an important charge in supporting the man who is discerning a vocation to the priesthood. Even more fundamentally, the family needs to be a place where a vocation is discussed, supported, and nurtured. The importance of prayer that God's invitation may be clearly heard in the heart of the man and that the man may respond generously with a gift of himself to Christ and His Church cannot be stressed enough. Fostering relationships with the pastor, other priests and the Bishop will allow the man to come to know the priestly life and provide valuable experience in working for the Church and serving God's people. Mass on Sundays and frequent/daily Mass attendance, Eucharistic adoration, devotions, catechetical/spiritual readings, serving in liturgical ministries (especially as an altar server), Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, and spiritual direction must be pivotal encounters in forming the man and creating clear channels for God to speak to his heart and mind.



## Lead

If you had a son or close relative or friend that was called to the priesthood, would you encourage or discourage them? Why/why not?

Are there any men within your family or friends who might be called to the priesthood, if so what are some steps you can take to encourage them to pursue the vocation to priesthood?

How can I make time each day to pray for vocations to the priesthood?

Is there time and energy spent by my parish praying for vocations to the priesthood? If not, in what way can the parish do this?

Spend some time reflecting of the role of the parish priest in the life of your family and parish. How much do you value the role/function of the priest? In what ways can your family/the parish support and encourage your parish priests?

What are ways that the parish can support those who might seek the priesthood?

Take some time to pray for someone you know to be called to the priesthood. Think of practical ways you would support them if they were called.

# Accompanying Families Toward Holiness



## Landscape

Marriage and family is another vocational call that needs attention. Where as the number of priests has declined over the years, so has the number of those married in the Catholic Church. In 1970 there were over 420,000 Catholic marriages compared to around 154,000 in 2014. (<https://www.ncronline.org/news/parish/despite-low-catholic-marriage-numbers-some-see-trend-turning-around>) Within the Diocese of Kalamazoo there were 589 marriages in the Church in 2000 and 247 in the year 2016. That is a 58% decrease in numbers.

There are differing views as to why this is, from more cohabitation leading to less marriages, to more civil marriages, to less marriages among younger age groups. Using the same data there are less marriages among the "none" group than within religious fields.

Looking at the figures of those ever married and their divorce rate (as opposed to strict divorce rate) Catholics have a 28% divorce rate. "While 28% remains a troubling statistic, the research suggests that this figure compares favorably with the 40% divorce rate for those with no religious affiliation, 39% for Protestants and 35% for those of other religious faiths." (<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/divorce-statistics-indicate-catholic-couples-are-less-likely-to-break-up>) These are promising figures in that the Catholic faith offers grace that strengthens the couple, helping them to remain as one.

With the divorce rate and less marriages there are a higher number of single parent households. According to Mlive 31% of Michigan families were single parent households in 2005 but in 2014 that number rose to 35%. Of those 74% were headed by single mothers. 22% of single mothers do not have jobs, and 14% of single fathers do not have jobs. This leads to a number of strains on the family (financial, time commitments, and parental influence on the children). Also, about 1/3 of families with married parents had both parents working full time, again leaving less family time together and more stress on the family for all of their commitments. (information from: [http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2015/11/traditional\\_family\\_only\\_9\\_of\\_h.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2015/11/traditional_family_only_9_of_h.html))

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>) there are 44,965 suicides each year in the United States. This averages out to be 123 a day. According to [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov) in 2009, suicide was the leading cause of injury death. However, those within the Catholic Church are less likely to commit suicide and Mass attendance is one of the leading indicators of reducing the number of suicides. (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/jssr.12117>)

Addiction, pornography use, abuse, abandonment, overcommitment, and financial concerns all affect families and their ability to function. The Catholic Church has a unique position to assist in each of these areas of concern. However, the influence of the Church on families has decreased throughout the years, as we see the number of sacraments decreasing every year. From 2000 to 2016 there has been 39% less infant baptisms. There is a need for every family we know (Catholic or not) to be accompanied toward holiness through the sacramental life of the Church.



# Learn

## **Quotes from Pope Francis on Accompaniment**

“The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169).

“One who accompanies others has to realize that each person’s situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without” (*EG*, 172). Listening, engaging in dialogue, catechizing, correcting with charity and truth - all without judgment - will invite ... others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel” (*EG*, 172).

“Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow” (*EG*, 172).

## **Mentor in Discipleship**

“Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization. Paul’s relationship with Timothy and Titus provides an example of this

accompaniment and formation which takes place in the midst of apostolic activity. Entrusting them with the mission of remaining in each city to 'put in order what remains to be done' (Titus 1:5; cf. 1 Tim 1:3-5), Paul also gives them rules for their personal lives and their pastoral activity. This is clearly distinct from every kind of intrusive accompaniment or isolated self-realization. Missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples" (EG, 173).

"Like to Like" mentors grow and develop each other. The shared foundation, commonly held viewpoints, modeling and witnessing being reciprocated back and forth between each other; these are the hallmarks of accompaniment. While Paul is describing to Titus the characteristics needed for the presbyters and bishops in Crete, these same qualities should exist in mentors and in those that are being formed as disciples, namely to be "hospitable, a lover of goodness, temperate, just, holy, and self-controlled" (Titus 1:8). In a similar fashion, Paul tells Timothy to look for "love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1: 5). Prayer is necessary and needed unceasingly!

## **What is Holiness?**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 2013: "'All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity (from *Lumen Gentium* 40).' All are called to holiness: 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (from Matthew 5:48).'" Holiness is constant and continual progress made in the spiritual life towards ever greater unity with

God through Jesus Christ. God calls everyone to holiness. "The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes" (CCC 2015). To be holy one must request the sacraments, possess lives of prayer (placing God first in our lives), lives of service to others (loving neighbor as self), and lives of charity. These start in the family and then go out to the world.

### **What do Catholic Families Look Like?**

Catholic families are the church at home, a domestic church. Most people's understanding of who God is stems from their family experience. A family "is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament" (CCC 2204). Love needs to be the hallmark of the family just as Christ loves His Church (cf. Ephesians 5:28-33). "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task" (CCC 2205).

## Lead

What are the struggles you have seen in family life, either in your own family or in that of others?

How is the family you grew up in, or your current family like a domestic church?

What are some practical ways you or your family has dealt with some of the strains society puts on families?

In what ways has your parish helped families grow toward holiness?

What are some practical ways that your church could help families grow in holiness and be strengthened against those things that harm them?

What are ways that families can pray in the busyness of life?

Take some time to think about holiness. In what ways do you want to be holy? What keeps you from being holy? What would encourage you to be holy?

# Activating Missionary Disciples



## Landscape

People are leaving faith. According to the 2010 census the nine counties that make up the Diocese of Kalamazoo had 64% of people claim "none" as their religion. The next highest is Catholic at right around 10%. Because only 10% of the population is Catholic, the Diocese of Kalamazoo is considered a mission diocese.

Here is some data on who the "none" population is:

# WHO are the Former Catholics and the “Nones”?

- **10% of American adults are now former Catholics**
- When Catholics leave the Church, they become:
  - **49% – “None”** (aka “unaffiliated” or “no religion”)
  - 25% – Evangelical Protestant
  - 13% – Mainline Protestant
  - 13% – Other (Mormon, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jewish, Muslim)
- **25% of Americans identify today as “none”** (i.e., no religion)
  - Highest percentage ever recorded: hovered from 4-6% (1970s-1980s), then rose during 90s to 14% (1999), 20% (2012), and today it’s surged to 25% (2016).
  - Now the single largest religious group in America
  - Interestingly, 21% of “nones” were raised unaffiliated while 28% were raised Catholic
- **39% of young adults (18-29) are “none”** (more than 3x the rate of “none” seniors aged 65+)
  - Today’s young adults are 4x more likely to be “none” than young adults in the previous generation
- Young Adults today
  - **39% = “none”**
  - **15% = Catholic**
  - 9% = white Evangelical Protestant
  - 8% = white mainline Protestant
  - 7% = black Protestant
  - 11% = other non-white Protestant
  - 7% = non-Christian religion
- **Large majority (64%) of today’s young adult “nones” were raised religious, but then left it**
- **Three types of “Nones”**
  - Rejectionists (58%) – Religion is not personally important, and it does more harm than good
  - Apatheists (22%) – Religion is not personally important, but it’s generally helpful to society

- Unattached Believers (18%) – Religion is personally important, and it’s generally helpful to society

## WHEN are They Leaving?

- **79% of former Catholics leave the Church before age 23 (Pew)**
  - **50% of Millennials raised Catholic no longer identify as Catholic today** (i.e., half of the babies you’ve seen baptized in the last 30 years, half of the kids you’ve seen confirmed, half of the Catholic young people you’ve seen get married)
    - **Only 7% of Millennials raised Catholic still actively practice their faith today** (weekly Mass, pray a few times each week, say their faith is “extremely” or “very” important)
- **90% of American “nones” who left religion did so before age 29 (PRRI)**
  - 62% leave before 18
  - 28% leave from 18-29
  - 5% leave from 30-49
  - 5% leave from 50+

## WHY are They Leaving?

- **PRRI Survey (2016)** – percentage of “nones” who said **reason(s) below** was an important reason they left religion
  - **60% – I stopped believing in the religion’s teachings**
  - **32% – My family was never that religious growing up**
  - **29% – Negative religious teachings about or treatment of gay and lesbian people**
    - 40% for women, 20% for men
    - 39% for Millennials, 12% for seniors
    - 39% raised Catholic, 29% raised anything else

- 19% – Clergy sex-abuse scandal
  - Interestingly, this was 26% for women and 13% for men
- 18% – Traumatic event in my life
- 16% – My church or congregation became too focused on politics.
- **Pew Survey – “Faith in Flux” (2009)** – percentage of former Catholics who said reason(s) below played a role in their departure
  - **71% – Just gradually drifted away from the religion**
  - **65% – Stopped believing in the religion’s teachings**
  - 43% – Spiritual needs not being met
  - 29% – Unhappy with teachings about the Bible
  - 26% – Dissatisfaction with atmosphere at worship services
  - 18% – Dissatisfaction with clergy at congregation
  - 10% – Found a religion they liked more
- **Diocese of Springfield Exit Surveys (2014)** – percentage of former Catholics who said reason(s) below played a role in their departure
  - **68% – Spiritual needs not met**
  - **67% – Lost interest over time**
  - 56% – Too many money requests
  - **48% – No longer believe**
  - 47% – Dissatisfaction with atmosphere
  - 38% – Too ritualistic
  - 36% – Too formal
  - 36% – Music not enjoyable

## Other Stats

- 66% of “nones” agree that “religion causes more problems than it solves”
- 60% of “nones” believe in God, either as a person with whom they can have a relationship (theism, 22%) or an impersonal force (deism, 37%)

source: <https://brandonvogt.com/new-stats-young-people-leave-church/>

Our sacramental participation and Mass participation has also been going down as they have been nationally. You can see this in the next two charts.

Year	Infant Baptisms	Minor Baptisms	Received into			Confirmations	Catholic Marriages	Interfaith Marriages	Total Marriages	Deaths	Catholic Population	Total Population
			Adult Baptisms	Full Communion	First Communion							
2000	1,551		236	337	1,444	1,199	306	283	589	855	117,004	916,359
2001	1,644		295		1,585	1,522	304	254	558	922	117,521	917,322
2002	1,580		315	293	1,417	1,383	301	249	553	1,021	116,740	937,037
2003	1,614		301	308	1,458	1,371	271	191	462	862	118,452	940,352
2004	1,430		209	261	1,441	1,325	257	158	415	862	117,088	940,352
2005	1,445		192	211	1,482	1,088	271	189	460	964	117,596	951,708
2006	1,491		371	358	1,229	1,131	231	176	407	879	109,318	951,561
2007	1,213	141	217	358	1,312	1,269	252	152	404	858	105,644	955,656
2008	1,398		219	226	1,278	1,162	219	133	352	767	107,700	952,812
2009	1,267		187	133	1,429	1,148	240	134	374	866	101,888	952,812
2011	1,306	41	138	177	1,244	1,101	190	122	312	812	102,152	950,990
2012	1,291	79	130	142	1,187	1,025	182	122	304	817	101,386	948,965
2013												
2014	1,035	66	114	177	1,157	1,008	178	87	265	809	108,916	949,135
2015	921	55	98	162	1,142	992	168	88	256	774	107,216	950,595
2016	915	71	110	175	920	916	168	79	247	751	101,113	953,355

source Kennedy Directory reported numbers for Diocese of Kalamzoo

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Average Mass Attendance per weekend in October	29155	28441	27415	27647	26843	26260	25119	24270
Percent of Registered Catholics	45.88%	46.17%	43.65%	42.60%	42.62%	42.03%	41.08%	39.36%
Percent of Estimated Catholic Population	28.61%	27.81%	26.26%	25.87%	24.61%	24.50%	24.81%	24.30%

source October Mass Counts reported by parishes in Diocese of Kalamzoo

# Learn

## **What is a Missionary Disciple?**

All are given the responsibility to be missionary disciples at our baptism. We are given a call to keep our light burning brightly for all to see. A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. Adhering to the life and teachings of Jesus, the disciple intentionally proclaims the Gospel in word and deed. The missionary disciple goes out and shares the message of The Good News so that the whole world may come to know that Jesus Christ is Lord (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). "The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: 'We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.' And they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ" (CCC 425).

## **How to Become a Disciple?**

In order to be a disciple, one must be willing to take off their old self and put on the new man found in following Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:20-24). Fostering a life of prayer, learning about the teachings of the Church in faith and morals, frequenting Mass and the Sacraments, engaging in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy; these and other practices open the heart to the Other, allowing the to-be disciple to journey confidently in charity through this life.

## **Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy**

**-Corporal Works of Mercy:** Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty, Shelter the homeless, Visit the sick, Visit the prisoners, Bury the dead, Give alms to the poor

**-Spiritual Works of Mercy:** Counseling the doubtful, Instructing the ignorant, Admonishing the sinner, Comforting the sorrowful, Forgiving injuries, Bearing wrongs patiently, Praying for the living and the dead

## **Stewardship**

To realize that all good comes from God and deserves to be given back to God, forms the understanding of stewardship. We are to take care of all we have as someone is given guard over a house until the owner returns. "Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly... Generous giving of time, talent, and treasure... As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord" (from usccb.org under "Stewardship"). The Christian steward models his or her life after Jesus (much like the disciple). While stewardship plays itself out in many ways in one's life, being a steward of the Church is a call given to all Christians to continue the work and mission of Christ to proclaim, teach, serve, and sanctify.

## **Leadership**

All leadership in the Church must be modeled after the divine leadership of Christ the Head. With a foundation rooted in charity, leadership must be willing to model Jesus in each and every encounter. The faithful who come to church to worship God are looking for Christ-like examples who exemplify the ideals of Christianity, for it is these ideals that souls wish to live themselves and want to be handed onto their families.

## **Liturgy=Discipleship**

“From the Church [the disciple] receives the Word of God containing the teachings of ‘the law of Christ.’ From the Church he receives the grace of the sacraments that sustains him on the ‘way.’ From the Church he learns the example of holiness and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary” (CCC 2030). The liturgy, as handed on by the Church, directs right worship of the God who loves us. By going to God the Father in praise and sacrifice the disciple offers himself, with petition and weakness and shortcoming, to be filled by Word and Sacrament and is given the grace to share The Good News with all that he encounters.



## Lead

What are the reasons that I follow Jesus, why do I care about my faith, what is my story of faith?

How can you live as a missionary disciple? How is your parish assisting you and others in living as missionary disciples?

Do you know people who have turned away from the faith, those who have no faith, those who do not understand the faith? How can you share your faith with them?

In what way can you/your parish pray for those who have fallen away from the faith or do not live within the faith?

Spend some time reflecting of the role others have had in your faith journey. What have they done for your faith? How have they shared their faith? How has your faith been strengthened by them? How can you do that for others?

In what ways can I actively seek to deepen my relationship with Jesus through study and prayer?

What are some ways your parish can reach out to the "nones"?

# **Parish, Finance and other Council Manual**

**Integrating the diocesan priorities into your priorities**



# Self Evaluation

## General Questions to Answer

Who are we, what is our mission?

What are the activities we do?

What is the goal of what we do?

Is the way we plan, act, and live in line with our mission and who we say we are?

In what ways do we bring others closer to Jesus (think beyond generic answers like schedule Mass, think along the lines of how do we get more people to Mass etc.)?

Where is Jesus in what we are doing and who we are?

In what ways do we see hurting people and help them?

# Self Evaluation

## Maintenance to Mission

There are two main modes of operation within an organization: maintenance or mission. Those focused on maintenance are reactive to problems, focused on staying afloat, fear what growth might bring, try to keep the minimum. Those focused on mission are looking forward, proactively seeking solutions before problems arise, keeping their mission at the forefront of decisions, anticipating growth, and focus on finding their limits.

Generally speaking the Catholic Church in America has found itself in a maintenance mindset for many years. This means we have rested on the idea that people will come to us. We continue to do things the same way even as the culture and climate changes around us. We assume that the Catholic identity people have will be enough to keep people at the church. We hope that enough will come into the collection to keep the lights burning. The maintenance mindset has us reacting to a lack of priests, the demise of families within our parishes, the lack of sacramental preparation, and the lack of disciples with fear and with bandaids. There is a need to move to mission orientation and this starts with all councils, organizations, and groups within our parishes. Mission must be the first thing on our mind, and our goal must be reaching beyond where we think the boundary is.

Evaluate if you are maintenance or mission oriented:

1. Activity:

Maintenance: We do the same activities no matter who comes, because we always do it this way.

Mission: We are devising ways to reach out to all people, creating a culture of encounter with Jesus Christ.

2. Leadership:

Maintenance: We find anyone regardless of ability or qualification to fill a role, because that role needs to be filled.

Mission: We create a culture where people discover their charisms and aid people in discovering how best they can serve God.

3. Commitment:

Maintenance: We continue to ask of the few that give to give more.

Mission: We seek to build up people to commit to Jesus and see their time, talent, and treasure as a commitment to Him.

4. Sustaining:

Maintenance: We focus on keeping those who are currently involved and not losing them, keeping our numbers mostly stagnant.

Mission: We focus on discipleship, sustaining a culture of conversion and growth.

5. Passing along the faith:

Maintenance: We do things the way we always have, because that is how we do it, even if it does not motivate or reach our parishioners, they must come to our way.

Mission: We seek those in our care no matter where they are and create a system of evangelization that reaches people and moves them through pre-evangelization, initial proclamation, and catechesis.

#### 6. Formation Process:

Maintenance: We form people only for the specifics of how to do their ministry.

Mission: We form the whole person no matter what ministry they are doing, focusing both on internal and external ministries.

#### 7. Communication:

Maintenance: We focus only on those who are "here" and we use language only they will understand.

Mission: We reach out to as many as we can, using language easy to understand by all.

#### 8. Missionary Spirit:

Maintenance: We plan everything to get some people to come to us, only expecting the few to participate.

Mission: We go out to the people, building up the kingdom of God and seeking to fill our ministries abundantly.

(Adapted from Indicators of a Maintenance-Driven Vs. Mission-Driven Parish, Diocese of Green Bay: [https://www.gbdioc.org/images/stories/Resource\\_Site/Bishops-Office/Documents/IndicatorsOfAMaintenance-DrivenVsMission-DrivenParish.pdf](https://www.gbdioc.org/images/stories/Resource_Site/Bishops-Office/Documents/IndicatorsOfAMaintenance-DrivenVsMission-DrivenParish.pdf))

# Embracing the Priorities

## Diocesan Priorities

Foster Priestly Vocations

Accompany Families Toward Holiness

Activate Missionary Disciples

## Questions to Address

1. Where can we find these three priorities in our current mission?
2. Where can we find these priorities in what we are already doing? (What could we easily change to focus what we are doing on these three priorities)
3. Taking into account our current plans, how do we make sure these priorities are utilized in future planning?
4. In what ways can we as a council embrace these priorities?
5. How do we help all in our parish know and embrace these priorities?

## Moving Forward

Every Parish in the Diocese of Kalamazoo must start looking forward toward a mission oriented future. We are a mission diocese and the vineyard is ripe. Now is the time to evaluate how we do things, what we need to do, where we are going, and what we will sacrifice to get there. It is a time of hope; a time to expect the filling of our parishes with active disciples; a time to expect families to be strong in faith and become holy, and a time to expect an abundance of people responding to God's vocational call.

It is recommended that as part of the future and continued planning for parishes that councils purchase [Living as Missionary Disciples](#) from the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis from the USCCB. Part two has a wonderful guide to "Developing a Pastoral Plan for Missionary Discipleship".

Every parish has been asked by Bishop Bradley to initiate a spiritual renewal program. This should be something that focuses on relationship with Jesus, and really promoting and strengthening the prayer life of your parishioners.

If we all embrace these priorities in our own parishes, and follow through with the bishop's initiatives from these priorities, we will find faith abundant in southwest Michigan. Our parishes will start to fill, and many will be brought into the family of Christ.

